

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PROP PARM MILI PL
SUBJ: INTENSE POLISH MEDIA CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE NEUTRON "BOMB"

1. SUMMARY: THE POLISH MEDIA HAVE WAGED AN INTENSIVE, FRONT-PAGE CRUSADE AGAINST THE NEUTRON "BOMB" SINCE EARLY MARCH. THE DEVICE IS DEPICTED AS AN EVIL WEAPON DIRECTED AGAINST HUMANITY, WHOSE PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT IS SUPPORTED ONLY BY A FEW ANACHRONISTIC COLD WARRIORS. SOCIETIES, EAST AND WEST, ALLEGEDLY OPPOSE THE WEAPON; PROTESTS AGAINST IT IN THE WEST ARE PLAYED UP AND, TO UNDERScore POLISH INDIGNATION, THE MEDIA HAVE MARSHALLED THE TESTIMONY OF PROMINENT CITIZENS AND PUBLISHED CONDEMNATORY STATE-
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MENTS FROM A RANGE OF ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS AROUND THE COUNTRY. THE FAVORITE SLOGAN IS "RIGHT TO LIVE IN PEACE". THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT THIS CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED REGIME CAMPAIGN, WHICH MAY, FOR A CHANGE, HAVE STRUCK SOME RESPONSIVE CHORDS AMONG THE PUBLIC, IS FLAGGING. END SUMMARY.

2. POLAND'S HIGH-INTENSITY MEDIA CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE NEUTRON

"BOMB" WAS RESUMED IN EARLY MARCH, IN THE WAKE OF THE SOVIET-SPONSORED RESOLUTION, PRESENTED TO THE GENEVA DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE, TO BAN THE PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT OF THE WEAPON. THE POLISH PRESS LAVISHED PRAISE ON THIS PROPOSAL AND PUBLISHED SEVERAL ARTICLES FROM TASS AND PRAVDA ON THE SUBJECT. AS THE BELGRADE CSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE ENDED WITH NO MENTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ITS FINAL DOCUMENT, THE MEDIA SHIFTED THEIR EMPHASIS TO THE "RIGHT TO LIFE" AS THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT, AND ONE THREATENED BY THE NEUTRON WEAPON. THE CAMPAIGN RECEDED BRIEFLY FROM FRONT PAGES IN MID-MARCH, AS THE MEDIA TURNED THEIR GUNS ON ISRAELI "AGGRESSION" IN LEBANON, BUT REGAINED THE CENTER OF ATTENTION BY MARCH 21 WITH REPORTS OF MEETINGS ORGANIZED IN UNIVERSITIES AND FACTORIES AROUND THE COUNTRY TO DENOUNCE THE NEUTRON "BOMB". SINCE THEN, STATEMENTS FROM INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS, ARTISTS, SCIENTISTS AND WORKERS HAVE FOLLOWED. POLISH CORRESPONDENTS ABROAD HAVE REPORTED AND SPECULATED ON THE ATTITUDES OF WESTERN GOVERNMENTS, ESPECIALLY THE FRG, TOWARDS THE WEAPON, AND CONCENTRATED ON ANTI-NEUTRON BOMB SENTIMENT IN THE WEST AS WELL AS IN "SOCIALIST" COUNTRIES. IN LATE MARCH, THE MEDIA BROADENED THE FIELD OF ATTACK, OPENING UP ON THE PENTAGON BUDGET AND PLANS FOR OTHER NEW U.S. WEAPONS SYSTEMS. HOWEVER, THE NEUTRON "BOMB" NEVER RELINQUISHED ITS FOREMOST POSITION IN THE LITANY OF EVILS ALLEGEDLY PERPETRATED AND PLANNED BY WARMONGERS IN THE UNITED STATES. AFTER TASS LINKED THE NEUTRON WEAPON WITH THE FUTURE OF DETENTE, THE POLISH MEDIA FOLLOWED SUIT.

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3. DESPITE THIS SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN, HOWEVER, EVEN THE MOST AVID READER WOULD BE HARD PUT TO EXPLAIN, ON THE BASIS OF WHAT HAS APPEARED IN THE POLISH PRESS, JUST WHAT THE NEUTRON DEVICE IS. THAT IT IS DESIGNED AS A TACTICAL WEAPON WAS MENTIONED ONCE IN PASSING; ONE ARTICLE NOTED IT IS INTENDED AS AN ANTI-TANK WEAPON, BUT ALLEGED IT WOULD BE SUPERFLUOUS AS SUCH, BECAUSE NATO ALREADY HAS AN ARSENAL BRIMMING OVER WITH EFFECTIVE ANTI-TANK WEAPONS. IGNACY MALECKI, BILLED AS "A GOVERNMENT EXPERT ON NEW WEAPONS", WAS QUOTED IN EXPRESS WIECZORNY OF MARCH 28 AS SAYING THE "NEUTRON BOMB IS ABOVE ALL A GENETIC WEAPON. SPECIALLY, THE ACTION OF THE NEUTRONS CAUSES GENETIC CHANGES WHICH CAN AFFECT MANY GENERATIONS." NOT ONLY CAN THE RADIATION PRODUCED BY THE NEUTRON WEAPON POISON AN AREA "TWICE" THAT AFFECTED BY A "CLASSICAL" ATOMIC BOMB OF COMPARABLE POWER, MALECKI CLAIMED, BUT IT IS CHEAPER TO MAKE THAN AN ATOMIC BOMB AND, PLACED IN THE HANDS OF SMALL UNITS, SUSCEPTIBLE TO USE WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF A HIGH COMMAND.

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4. WHILE REMAINING VAGUE ABOUT THE TECHNICAL DETAILS AND MILITARY
ROLE OF THE WEAPON POLISH MEDIA COMMENTARY HAS CONSISTENTLY
FOCUSSED ON THE GRAVE THREAT TO PEACE IT ALLEGEDLY POSES. IT IS
PORTRAYED AS A MASS-DESTRUCTION WEAPON MORE GRISLY THAN AN ATOMIC
BOMB, ULTIMATELY ANTI-HUMAN BECAUSE IT IS DIRECTED AGAINST
PEOPLE RATHER THAN PROPERTY. IF IT IS DEPLOYED, ACCORDING TO THE
COMMENTATORS, IT COULD SHAKE THE FOUNDATIONS OF EAST-WEST RELA-
TIONS. ITS EXISTENCE IS SAID TO VIOLATE TWO FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN
RIGHTS, THE RIGHT TO LIFE AND THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN PEACE. A
LENGTHY, (UNSIGNED) ARTICLE, PUBLISHED IN THE PARTY DAILY
TRYBUNA LUDU MARCH 28 AND FULL OF BOLD TYPE TO HIGHLIGHT ITS
IMPORTANCE, EXPOUNDED ON THESE RIGHTS AS FOLLOWS: "AMONG HUMAN
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RIGHTS, THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN PEACE OCCUPIES A SPECIAL PLACE...
BECAUSE, ESPECIALLY TODAY, IN THE FACE OF WEAPONS OF MASS DES-
TRUCTION, IT CONDITIONS ALL OTHER RIGHTS. JUST AS THE RIGHT TO
LIFE IS THE CONDITION FOR THE USE OF OTHER RIGHTS BY THE INDI-

VIDUAL, SO DOES THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN PEACE DETERMINE, IN THE END,
THE USEFULNESS OF ALL EFFORTS,...SOCIAL OR INDIVIDUAL, FOR
MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL PROGRESS." IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, THERE
HAS BEEN A BLIZZARD OF FURTHER ARTICLES
LDWELLING ON THIS THEME.

5. IN A MARCH 30 CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER, A
HIGHLY RESPECTED POLISH BROADCAST JOURNALIST SAID THE MEDIA
CAMPAIGN MAY WELL REFLECT GENUINE REGIME CONCERNS OVER THE
NEUTRON DEVICE. ON THIS QUESTION, HE SAID, THE OFFICIAL POLISH
POSITION IS TRULY IN ACCORD WITH THAT OF THE USSR. THE SOVIETS,
THE JOURNALIST CONTINUED, ARE SO WORRIED ABOUT THE WEAPON THAT
A US DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT WOULD
MEAN A RESUMPTION OF THE COLD WAR. HE SPECULATED THAT SUCH A
DECISION WOULD FORCE THE USSR TO CHANGE A STRATEGY OF 20
YEARS' STANDING, BOTH BECAUSE TANKS WOULD BE RENDERED LESS USEFUL
AND BECAUSE OF THE INCREASED POSSIBILITY THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS
WOULD BE PUT INTO GERMAN HANDS.

6. COMMENT: THE RECENT STRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ESPECIALLY THE
RIGHT TO LIVE IN PEACE, IN THE POLISH CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE NEUTRON
"BOMB", IS A CLEVER STROKE. FOR ONCE, THE OFFICIAL MEDIA MAY
HAVE STRUCK A RESPONSIVE CHORD AMONG THE POLISH POPULACE, MANY
OF WHOM STILL HAVE BITTER PERSONAL MEMORIES OF POLAND'S WARTIME
SUFFERING AND SEE A GENUINE POLISH STAKE IN THE MAINTENANCE OF
EAST-WEST DETENTE. BECAUSE THE FULL STORY ON THE NEUTRON SHELL,
AND ON SOVIET WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT, IS NOT AVAILABLE TO THE PEOPLE
IN THE STREET, THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN, PLAYING HEAVILY ON LATENT
FEARS OF WAR, COULD BE REGISTERING SOME SUCCESS IN ITS EFFORT
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TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION. ONE MILITANT DISSIDENT CONCEDED TO
AN EMBASSY OFFICER APRIL 1 THAT THIS
IN FACT WAS HAPPENING -- THUS,
E.G., THE WILLINGNESS OF MANY YOUNG PEOPLE, OTHERWISE UNSYM-
PATHETIC TO REGIME VIEWS, TO JOIN IN ANTI-NEUTRON "BOMB" MANI-
FESTATIONS. TO COUNTERACT THE LACK OF INFORMATION ON SUCH
MATTERS AS RELATIVE STRENGTH OF NATO AND WARSAW PACT FORCES IN
EUROPE AND, IN PARTICULAR, ON SOVIET WEAPONRY SUCH AS THE SS-20,
THE DISSIDENT SAID HE WAS CONTEMPLATING CIRCULATING LEAFLETS,
BASED IN PART ON RELEVANT US EMBASSY PRESS RELEASES, IN THE AREA
WHERE HE LIVES. EVEN IF HE WERE TO SUCCEED IN THIS EFFORT,
THE LEAFLETS WOULD, OF COURSE, REPRESENT A DROP IN A LOCAL BUCKET
AS AGAINST THE NATIONWIDE FLOOD OF MATERIAL CARRYING THE REGIME'S
MESSAGE. END COMMENT.
SCHAUFLE

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